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Tajuk : Sarawak Strong Hub For Science, Innovation.

# Sarawak strong hub for science, innovation

BY STEPHANIE JONG

**P**EOPLE of Sarawak have something new to be proud of, as our beautiful State has been formally introduced and inducted into the STEM States Alliance. We are now one of only a few States in the Asia-Pacific region that the alliance will work with on an ongoing basis, to develop Sarawak as a STEM education and innovation hub. This was confirmed by Global 20 STEM States Director, Scott Campbell in an interview with New Sarawak Tribune during STEMfest 2013, held at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) in Kota Samarahan.

"The world's international associations are recognising that. They are committing to working with Sarawak from now on. This is where we will really see some momentum coming," said Scott, when met by New Sarawak Tribune recently.

"The conference has been a great success. This is the first time that a group of so many international associations have come together, and it's great to have that in the State.

"Sarawak is fast becoming a science,

technology, engineering and mathematics education hub. Having STEMfest here is a commitment towards that," he added.

The event itself was brought together by people from 40 countries. The world's scientific community is focused on our grounds this month.

"It's really exciting. Sarawak is a place where scientists from all over the world come to undertake research. They have done that for a number of years now. A lot of pharmaceuticals and medical discoveries come from your State. So what that means is we can look at engaging the scientists with school kids here in Sarawak," he continued.

"By doing that, we can actually get Sarawak to have a very strong interest and focus on STEM. What Sarawak's strengths are, are in the areas of biodiversity and environmental sciences. A lot of the work happening here in Unimas for example, is recognised worldwide."

Science is very diverse. It is great to know prominent figures realise that our society and natural resources have great potential because of our biodiversity.

Scott acknowledged that, stating: "There are so many medicines - just two or three years ago there was a new antibiotic that was discovered... the only treat-

ment for an infection that is a 'super-bug' contagion. Just a few years ago, it (the antibiotic) was discovered here in Sarawak from a fungus that grows in the soil. So there is so much to discover here, and scientists around the world are very interested," he shared.

"Now, what we have to do is get those scientists collaborating and working with local schools, with local universities. If we can do that, Sarawak will rapidly grow as a science, education, and innovation hub. It'll all flow from there, but that's what we have to achieve."

It is also widely recognised that today, Sarawak has great strategies in place for industry development. However, Scott noted that any challenge that would arise would fall around skills development and our government.

"People in Sarawak know that. To solve that problem, it's about focusing on education in the right areas. STEMfest's role is to come up with ideas and strategies to get Sarawak and other cities around the world who are in a similar position with the strategy for going forward in those sort of fields, on how to address education."

New Sarawak Tribune was informed that STEMfest 2014 would be held in Adelaide, Australia in early December.



GLOBAL 20 STEM States Director, Scott Campbell talks to New Sarawak Tribune about STEMfest in Unimas recently. PHOTO: LESTER GERES

Scott revealed that there was already a line-up of about six or seven conferences next year. There will be an introduction of new conferences on top of existing ones that have been held for alternate years too. Scott hopes for the continued growth STEMfest, to have 10 to 15 conferences in the future. Canada is set to be host in the following year.

"One of the main legacies we're going to leave now is that a lot of the associations that are here, are going to work with us - we've got a team here that will stay

in Sarawak, who will help these associations to set up an office here.

"We want the associations that have come here to set up office, and work some of their Asia-Pacific activities from Kuching. That has huge benefits because if you have international associations based in your city, you bring a constant flow of conferences. You also bring in a constant flow of experts and so on, that have significant benefits. STEMfest has very strong legacies for Kuching," he beamed.